

Divorce and Adultery

595 The polygynous unions were extremely brittle. In two cases observed
586 by Quain, they lasted only a few days. In both instances the first wife
[837] was responsible for the break-up. The bonds of the second marriage of a
plural mating were loose, for Jakwanari's second wife had sexual relations with several Trumai men with apparent impunity. Such behavior would have been dealt with severely by a husband had his first wife
586 been involved. Divorces also occurred in monogamous marriages; they entailed little more than telling the wife to leave. After the birth of their son, Oirupa sent his Mehinaku wife back to her village and kept the child. The right of the father's village over the children seems to have been general in the area, for Autu had a son by a Waurá husband, whom the Waurá refused to give to the Trumai.

684 There is no recorded instance of adultery precipitating a divorce,
[586] although this probably occurred. However, the usual procedure was for the injured husband to beat his wife and make a lengthy and heated speech against the offending suitor. The wife of an adulterous husband
[578] showed anger toward his paramour and did not speak to her. Hair pulling resulted in some cases. The husband's behavior was viewed as reprehensible by the wife, but she took no action against him. One wife even chuckled a bit over her husband's adventures, although jealousy is the more usual response.

837 Due to the threat of punishment, the married women engaged far less in extra-marital relations than did their husbands. Both married and unmarried men sought out unattached women, but instances of married men in such liaisons were less numerous. The younger married men and Maibu, the chief, seemed to have been the chief offenders. The latter
[582] complained to Quain that all the women in the village were prohibited to him, as they were his wife's cross-cousins. Neither his genealogy nor his activities bore him out, and he often approached the single women and Jakwanari's second wife when the other men were out of the village. Everyone conceded that, although Maibu's wife had not reached menopause, she was "too old." Thus they rationalized his escapades.

105 The instability of the nuclear family and the vicissitudes to which it
591 was exposed were alleviated by household and kin distribution and by
594 the interdependence of co-resident relatives of the opposite sex for
592 sexually specialized goods and services. These arrangements made possible the economic workability of Trumai culture. The conjugal family was basic to the culture, however, and marriage was highly
[836] desirable to the Trumai. Despite the shortage of available women and
[598] the conflicts which stemmed from it, sex relations between unmarried persons were free and easy and subject to little or no public censure, except insofar as they encroached on the interests of others. Incest

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[186] Quain was told that the Kamayurá were "bad," because they permitted marriage with a sister's daughter.*

582 Cross-cousin marriage is correlated with sororal polygyny among the
595 Trumai and with the sexual privileges that a man may take with his
837 wife's sister. No indication was found of the sororate, despite its probable acceptability. There was only one case of the levirate, and that was the
587 marriage of the chief to his dead brother's wife. That the levirate is expected but not compulsory is apparent in the case of Yati and his brother's widow Vatsiat. She resided in Yati's house, and they performed
[46] many necessary, sexually specialized functions for each other. Although their hammocks were some distance apart, Vatsiat called him ece (husband) and became quite incensed at one of his paramours. However, Yati called her *apizi* (sibling), and apparently felt that there were no marital obligations between them. He had his love-life, which did not
[83] include her, and he showed no sign of annoyance at her escapades. It was a standing joke that every man in the village had sexual relations with Vatsiat, except where an incest taboo prohibited it.

582 Marriage between people of different generations, especially between
684 older women and younger men, was frequent; but the rules governing
835 such unions are obscure. It was specifically frowned upon for a man to marry his mother's brother's widow. However, when one young man did so, he was only mildly ridiculed and censured, and his status in the village was little affected.

Joking Relations

581 Cross-cousins were not the only acceptable marriage partners, but
602 they were the only ones with whom marriage was expected and especially
831 approved. Also, patterned and expected joking existed only between these kin. Cross-cousins of the same sex, especially males, bantered with each other, but most sexual joking occurred between men and women. Thus, Aloari enjoyed making suggestive remarks to the rather old and ugly Vatsiat and frequently accused her of improprieties with various men. On one occasion, partly for Quain's benefit, he threw her on her back and went through the motions of coitus.

602 Cross-cousins of the same sex confined their joking to pranks and
605 good-natured raillery, *ami tarajau*, which Quain translates as "cross-cousin talk." Mayuva teased Yati, who had a phobia of frogs, by chasing
831 after him with a frog hanging from a stick. Both men and women made great sport of urging Quain to throw their cross-cousins out of his house.
123 On one occasion, Quain, experimentally, made sexual suggestions to
602 several women who had congregated in his house. They all ran out
831 laughing shrilly, but one came back later to reassure that it was

* Cf. Oberg 1953, p. 44.